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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 002726

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL TO FR](#)

SUBJECT: TOGO: FRENCH MFA HOPING FOR CREDIBLE ELECTIONS AND
NO VIOLENCE

REF: A. PARIS 1229 (NOTAL)

[1](#)B. PARIS 952 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Acting DCM Josiah Rosenblatt for reason 1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: MFA DAS-equivalent for West Africa Foucher on April 20 discussed elections in Togo. He said that France opposed Germany's efforts to have the EU call for postponing the elections. He predicted that there would inevitably be fraud during the elections but hoped that it would not be so great as to discredit the results. Foucher reiterated France's support of ECOWAS. There would be no official French elections observers from Paris. Foucher said the French did not favor any specific outcome to the elections but hoped only that they be held in a credible manner. Foucher forcefully distanced the GOF from Charles Debbasch, a close associate of the Eyadema regime who continues to be active in Togo. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) MFA DAS-equivalent for West Africa Bruno Foucher met with Africa Watcher April 20 to discuss a range of topics (septels). Concerning Togo, he said that France opposed Germany's request that the European Union recommend postponing elections in Togo. He offered an EU text on this matter that France could support, although he was not certain that the EU would adopt it (text in para 7 below).

[1](#)3. (C) Foucher reiterated French support of ECOWAS and its efforts to move Togo forward following Eyadema's death. He said that ECOWAS's evaluation of the elections would weigh heavily in France's assessment of their credibility. Foucher said that France would not send election observers, however. Two French senators were willing to go to Togo, but the GOF preferred that they do so under the aegis of the International Francophonie Organization (OIF). The OIF, however, declined to give its imprimatur to the senators, so the GOF decided not to send them. Foucher indicated that the GOF wanted to avoid the appearance of French intrusion into the elections and had concerns that the security situation in Togo might prove tenuous. Hence, only the French Embassy in Togo would observe the elections on the GOF's behalf.

[1](#)4. (C) When asked what would happen if Faure Gnassingbe won, Foucher said the situation could become difficult, as the opposition had already signaled that it would likely protest such an outcome. Foucher said that there were bound to be voting irregularities, but he hoped they would prove to be small and not systemic. He hoped "we don't discover massive fraud." He acknowledged that there seemed to be evidence of voting cards that had not reached voters, either through oversight, neglect, or fraud. Foucher said that France hoped the elections would be carried out in a manner that would allow observers to find the results credible.

[1](#)5. (C) Referring again to French support for ECOWAS, Foucher noted that ECOWAS planned to have 120 observers in place. He acknowledged that France might find itself in a difficult position if ECOWAS's post-election assessment of the vote was "ambiguous." Foucher at several points reiterated that France had no favorite in the presidential race and would accept its outcome, so long as the elections were seen as credible.

[1](#)6. (C) When asked about Charles Debbasch, the French citizen long involved in the Eyadema regime's affairs (reftels), Foucher strongly and emphatically stated that Debbasch had no connection whatsoever with the GOF and was working solely on his own behalf. He noted Debbasch's legal problems in France and referred to him in ways suggesting that Foucher considered him a fugitive from justice. Foucher said that he personally had been involved in having the GOF refuse two requests that Debbasch be accorded Togolese "ambassadorial" status, which Foucher said were plainly attempts by Debbasch to protect himself and his property in France. Debbasch, according to Foucher, was still attempting to obtain diplomatic status in Portugal and Germany.

[1](#)7. (SBU) Informal Embassy translation of draft EU text on elections in Togo.

BEGIN TEXT:

-- On the eve of the presidential elections that will have an important effect on the future of the country, the EU expresses the hope that they will take place correctly and

calmly. In this regard, it expresses its concern with respect to the tensions that have marked preparations for the elections and that have led to a degradation of the political climate in Togo.

-- The EU calls on all Togolese political forces and institutions to demonstrate responsibility and openness to ensure that every citizen has the chance to vote freely, in a calm and transparent environment, so that the elections can be held credibly.

-- The EU renews its support to the efforts of ECOWAS for its mediation and for the follow-up to the electoral process, within the framework of the accord between the majority and the opposition that was adopted on February 28, under the leadership of President Tandja.

-- The EU is following closely the holding of electoral operations before, during, and after the vote and will base its future positions in consideration of all these elements.

-- The EU recalls the importance of respecting the 22 elements undertaken by the Togolese Government within the framework of consultations concerning article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement with respect to the restoration of democracy, respect for human rights, and respect for fundamental freedoms.

END TEXT.
WOLFF